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## A REVIEW OF ITALIAN MODERNISM

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The future historian of Modernism will be much embarrassed by the contradictory appreciations and misjudgments which are to be found in our contemporary literature on this subject. One book presents Modernism as a movement of the Latin mind, distrusting individualism and laying stress upon the corporate element in religion; another writer, on the contrary, characterizes Modernism as "a spirit of anarchy, of individualism, of personal distinction and culture." To some writers Modernism is the greatest spiritual movement ever produced inside the Catholic Church, while to others it is an insignificant and useless dream of a few not completely developed minds. Consequently some of them outline the development of Modernism as an anecdotic history without a real unity in purpose, while others conceive of it as of a system of theology derived from certain fixed and definite philosophic premises.

On the whole, little attention has been paid to the facts upon which the development of modernist ideas depends. Especially the history of Italian Modernism has been greatly miscalculated on account of this lack of appreciation of the historical ground and the environment in which the movement was born and developed. A com-

prehensive history of Modernism has not yet been written; but so far as it concerns Italy, only by going back to the history of the intellectual and moral life of the Italian clergy since the last quarter of the nineteenth century shall we be able to understand the true nature and the true spirit of Italian Modernism and to value its importance in the history of the Roman Church.

The fall of the temporal kingdom of the papacy completed Italy's political unity, but rendered for a time more difficult the achievement of the moral unity of the nation. The Catholic clergy, numerous, rich, and very influential with the populace, were of course openly hostile to the new régime, especially in the provinces of Southern Italy. Closely connected with the clergy was the great majority of the aristocracy — all the bishoprics and the highest ecclesiastical offices being filled with cadets of noble families; and this alliance between the Church and the highest social classes had shaped the customs of the ecclesiastical hierarchy into a peculiar aristocratic type. The new government, already struggling hard to overwhelm the divergent tendencies of the Italian provinces, so different among themselves in economic and moral standards, in traditions and interests of all kinds, had also to reckon with a clergy in open or covert hostility toward it.

Extreme measures were adopted. The Piedmontese law was passed by the national Parliament, abolishing religious orders and ecclesiastical benefices in no connection with cure of souls, and transferring all their estates to the public domain, with the purpose of establishing schools and other educational institutions in behalf of the people. It is interesting to notice that such a fierce blow to the Church was considered by many — and the best members of the clergy itself — as a punishment of God for the deep corruption of religious life in convents and parishes. In a book which belonged to

a Sicilian convent one of the friars, heart-broken, wrote before his leaving the convent forever, the following words:

“Manus Domini cecidit super nos; iniquitates nostrae supergressae sunt cacumina montium et nos facti sumus sicut filii maledictionis et irae. Semitas rectas non calcavimus et cum meretricibus panem nostrum comedimus. Aurum et argentum, ingluviem et voluptates, dileximus nimis; propterea Dominus oblitus est nostri, derelinquens nos in potestate inimici. Justum est judicium tuum Domine. Amen.”

The first effect of the abolition of the religious orders was the breaking of the link of interests that had bound the aristocracy to the Church. There were many convents in Italy reserved exclusively for the members of the aristocracy. It was impossible to be accepted as a monk (to live the life of humility and penitence!) in those convents unless a title of nobility could be shown. Those places were veritable *vivaria* for bishops and high prelates, who were supposed to be educated and trained through the hard trials of monastic discipline. But in fact life in those convents was easy, and this ecclesiastical aristocracy remained feudal in its spirit and oppressive in its forms; excessively proud of ancestors and titles, by which they believed themselves to bestow honor upon the ecclesiastical offices instead of being honored by them.

Extremely jealous of their prerogatives, those bishops of noble families transformed their residences into little courts, with all the rigid ceremonial of Spanish aristocracy, the same extravagant display of servants and liveries, besides a complicated system of kneeling down and bowing and hand-kissing, to which more or less valuable indulgences were attached. But as soon as the Church lost its temporal power, and the alliance between the throne and the altar was dissolved, the aristocracy deserted the Church party, so that today very few members

of that class are to be found on the list of Italian bishops and prelates. Even the pontifical diplomatic body, until a few years ago exclusively reserved for the ecclesiastical aristocracy, is now contaminated with many upstarts from the lower classes. This progressive disappearance of the aristocracy from the ranks of the Italian clergy is to be considered as an important fact in connection with the new mentality of the clergy of the next period.

The withdrawal of the aristocracy was, for various reasons, gradually imitated by the well-to-do people, and today the Italian clergy is almost entirely recruited from the rural classes. One of these reasons — which is of capital importance in preparing the basis of the Modernism to come — was the action of the government in taking over the administration of public schools and public education and freeing it from clerical interference. During the old régime there were two kinds of educational institutions: the *Seminaria clericorum*, one in each diocese, under the control of the bishop, and the *Colleges* of the Jesuits or of other religious orders. The teachers were all members of the secular or the regular clergy, and even the universities were under the direct or indirect control of the Church.

The new government secularized the universities, even abolishing theological Faculties, closed all the Colleges of the religious orders and reduced the *Seminaria* to the condition of private institutions, whose diplomas were deprived of any value as titles for admission to public offices or public liberal professions. The *Seminaria*, though established by the Council of Trent for the education of the clergy, had been for a long time institutions of a broader scope. In the absence of other secondary schools, most young men desiring to enter a liberal profession there received their classical and philosophical education, so that clergy and laymen had

the same mental training without divergence in their spiritual culture. The new law on public education cut off such a connection. While the public schools under the new régime of liberty were open to all modern ideas and scientific methods, the *Seminaria* not only stood by their old methods, but through an inevitable reaction against the irreligious spirit of the public schools became even more conservative, thus fixing an enormous gulf between the mentality of the new clergy of the *Seminaria* and the young laymen growing up in the public schools. This breaking of relations between the ecclesiastical and the lay culture is another mile-stone in the history of Italian Modernism.

The Italian clergy that came up in the difficult years between 1870 and 1880 developed a higher moral standard under adversity than their predecessors. A kind of ascetic renaissance was visible among the young priests, monks, and friars. These last were trying under enormous difficulties, in the face of poverty and the open hostility of the law, to reorganize their religious families from the foundations. Many members of this young clergy found a compensation for the lost influence in public education, in work of a social-charitable character. Some of them were very successful in establishing orphanages, hospitals, and asylums for old people unable to work. Don Giovanni Bosco in Turin, Fr. Ludovico da Casoria in Naples, Don Giacomo Cusumano in Palermo, were three very remarkable men who founded, besides numerous charitable institutions, the religious congregations of *Salesiani*, *Frati Bigi*, and *Boccone del Povero*, for the assistance and the education of the people whom they had gathered in their asylums.

But the rise of the moral level of the younger Italian clergy was accompanied by a decline of interest in culture. All participation in the political life of the nation had been severely forbidden to the clergy, and in general

to all Italian Catholics, by Pope Pius IX. The young clergy faithfully followed these pontifical instructions, while many rebels were to be found among the ranks of the older clergy. It seems strange that those young Italian priests and friars should have been more conservative than their older brothers educated in the revolutionary period; but it was logical enough. An unbroken tradition of liberalism has never failed to have some — and valiant — representatives among the Italian clergy. Even in the worst periods of decadence there were among them high-minded persons, who not only did not share the retrogressive spirit of their environment but anticipated their time, and in their writings outlined some of the modern religious views. During the nineteenth century, Gioberti (*La Riforma Cattolica*), Rosmini (*Le Sette Piaghe della Chiesa*), Lambruschini (*Lettere*), Curci (*Il Vaticano Regio*), to quote only the most famous names, were splendid illustrations of the everlasting vitality among the Italian clergy of a spirit of liberty and of reaction against the oppression of minds and of consciences. In the revolutionary period, during the hard and long struggle for national independence, many liberal priests and friars gave their life or their best activity for the patriotic cause.

When the war was over, this liberal clergy was rewarded by the government with good positions, either in public schools or in ecclesiastical offices dependent upon civil authority. But for the same reason they were very unwelcome at the Vatican, which did not dare to molest them for fear of complications with the government, but constantly barred them from any higher ecclesiastical offices, like the bishoprics, and above all from the teaching staff of seminaries and other ecclesiastical schools. The new clergy had been thus educated by the most conservative element, and had been taught that Garibaldi was a brigand, Cavour a cheat, Victor Emmanuel an ex-

communicated king, that the new kingdom was ephemeral, and that in a few years the old régime would be completely restored. Their knowledge of the history of the Church was limited to a general outline presented by some compilations lacking not only scientific spirit but even common sense. In many seminaries, especially of Southern Italy, Church history was not taught at all. Most of these theological schools had only three courses: dogmatic theology, moral theology, and elementary ecclesiastical law—no history, no biblical studies, not even the reading of the Bible itself. Hundreds of students of these schools reached the priesthood without knowing the names of the books of the Old and the New Testament.

The philosophical education of that clergy was not very conspicuous. The text-book adopted in many seminaries was a compilation by the Oratorian priest Valla, a strange mixture of Cartesianism and theology. The reconciliation between empiricism in dialectic, innatism in theodicy, and dualism in psychology — between that Cartesianism and Catholic dogma defined in scholastic terms, was reached through a series of compromises which certainly did not offer a very solid base for a systematic theology. Here was a real danger, of which most of those ecclesiastical teachers were, for lack of scientific training, unaware. The result was that the few men among the Italian clergy with a true philosophical mind who tried to find a reconciliation between faith and philosophy lost their faith, becoming either skeptics like Ausonio Franchi or positivists like Roberto Ardigò. In the meanwhile, the storm of Positivism had broken over Italian Universities. It was supported by men of great authority, like Siciliani, Lombroso, Angiullo, Corleo, and especially the former priest just mentioned, R. Ardigò. Positivism became the philosophy of the day, taking also the character of a strong protest against



clericalism and the Church of Rome. Thus politics and philosophy were united in the effort to minimize the power of the Church, accused, as it was, of obscurantism and suspected of continuous machinations to destroy the unity of the young kingdom. So between the mental attitude of the clergy and that of the cultured classes the gulf became wider. No reconciliation was possible between reactionary clericalism and irreligious positivism; both dogmatic, both intolerant; the former holding firmly to the Syllabus of Pius IX, the latter to the new gospel of Haeckel and Moleschott.

From 1880 to 1890 things changed a great deal. Leo XIII began his pontificate with a definite programme—the restoration of the temporal and the spiritual authority of the papacy. First of all, a strong centralization of clerical powers was necessary. Conditions were extremely favorable. The new clergy had been educated to belief in the dogma of infallibility. Furthermore, the Italian revolution, in breaking the bond between the Church and the State and depriving the Church of many privileges, gave up many of the rights of the State in ecclesiastical matters which had been based on the old concordats between the Roman Curia and the former Italian princes. Thus the Church acquired a free hand in the appointment of bishops. Under the old régime, with most of the Italian bishoprics under the *Jus patronatus* of princes and kings, prelates who received their appointment from the civil authority were likely to be more devoted to the interests of the dynasties than to the interests of the papacy, and not infrequently the bishops took a haughty attitude, almost of rebellion, against the popes.

When Leo was elected, the Italian bishops were more closely united to the papal See than ever in the history of the papacy. This unity of discipline, however, was to be strengthened by a closer moral and

intellectual unity. Leo wanted a clergy unified in aims and will with him, so as to be not only a docile but also an intelligent instrument for the realization of his plan. The first step towards this unification was the imposition of scholastic philosophy as the only philosophy to be accepted and professed by the clergy.

Pope Leo was obeyed. In a few years all the teachers of philosophy and theology in Italian seminaries threw away their Cartesianism, and the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas became the new gospel of the clerical schools. The Pope knew well how to keep alive the enthusiasm for the official philosophy of the Vatican by appointing into the cardinalate three or four among the most fervent Thomists and filling the staffs of pontifical universities and other clerical schools with their followers. Unknown men in a few years reached the top of the Roman hierarchy, only on account of some mediocre handbook of scholastic philosophy or some volume of *Theologia dogmatica ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis*. Thus every Italian seminarist learned that it was possible to find a red hat among the pages of the *Summa Theologica*.

Certainly in comparison with the indecision of the philosophy of the preceding period, the scholastic method seemed to be a strong mental discipline, a kind of intellectual gymnastic; but it was rather a gymnastic of formulas than of thoughts and ideas. The hunting of fallacies was the most important part of the game in those schoolrooms, and when the fallacy was found and the syllogism built in accordance with the rules upon ingenious distinctions and subdistinctions, then the work was done, and students were as proud as an entomologist who, having caught a rare insect, fixes it in his box in the right place required by a rigorous classification. And what else was philosophy for those young students but a box in which to fix the truth with a pin, according to a dogmatic classification? Before the philosophic

problems brought up by the new renaissance of idealism, which in this period drove out positivism from Italian universities, the neo-scholastic philosophy, as it was taught in ecclesiastical schools, remained imperturbable. A few words in their handbooks were enough to dismiss Kant, Hegel, and the others. Generally such systems were characterized as "*somnia dementium*," and the moral value of modern philosophy was summarized in a pious quotation: "*Deus quos vult perdere dementat*."

The intellectual unification of the Italian clergy was thus achieved. Pope Leo then went a step further; he wanted Italian Catholics organized in a strongly disciplined political party. While securing political alliances at large, urging Catholics in France to rally to the Republic and in Germany to the central Prussian monarchy, Leo did not forget that the key of the position was at home; the restoration of the papal kingdom was to be principally founded on the feelings of the Italian people. A Catholic majority was to be organized and politically educated under pontifical directions. The policy of abstentionism that had been the *credo* of Italian Catholics, expressed in the words, "Neither electing nor elected," was slightly modified: "Organize to become both when the time is ripe." The motto of the clergy had been, "Far from public affairs!"; the new motto was, "*Fuori di sacrestia* — Out from the sacristy!" Thus under the control of the Vatican, the *Opera dei Congressi* was organized and rapidly spread in all the Italian provinces, with a large system of *Comitati diocesani* (diocesan committees) and *Comitati parrocchiali* (parish committees). The immediate purpose of this organization of Catholic forces on a uniform scheme was the gradual conquest of public powers.

Young priests and friars in their enthusiasm for proselytism began to spread their ideas through conferences, lectures, newspapers, and magazines; having confidence

in themselves and in the righteousness of their cause, they were inspired by the generous desire of enlightening the entire world. They were men of good will. Their teachers had taught them, that "beyond St. Thomas there was but the immediate vision of God, and outside the Roman Church there is no salvation"; therefore they felt it their duty to bring the world to St. Thomas and to the Roman Church.

In the meanwhile, Italian bishops thought of another conquest — public schools. Italian law does not bar any man—even a priest—graduated from an Italian Royal University from being appointed, after regular examination, to teach in the public schools. As in most of the Italian dioceses priests were more numerous than needed by the religious life of the people, many bishops thought that there was a good opportunity to send intelligent young priests to follow the regular courses in the Royal Universities, in order to graduate and fill positions in public schools. Thus they intended through these priests to acquire an indirect control over public education. It cannot be denied that the general plan outlined by Pope Leo was imposing and clever; but its execution was confided almost entirely to the Italian clergy, supported in the beginning only by a few laymen belonging to the cultured classes, or rather to the old aristocracy remaining faithful to the Vatican. Pope Leo had great confidence that his clergy, educated in clerical seminaries far from worldly interferences and thoroughly fed with scholastic philosophy, was well fitted and ready for the hard task to be accomplished. Was he justified in his confidence? The history of the papacy never registered a more complete and miserable failure of a pontifical programme of religious and political restoration.

The last twelve years (1890–1902) of the pontificate of Leo XIII saw the blossoming of all this long-prepared activity. The Italian clergy, in spite of the uniformity

in the educational methods of the clerical seminaries, was far from homogeneous; various groups were to be distinguished. To the first belonged many priests neither intelligent nor ambitious, who had no farther aspiration than parish work as assistants in some village or country town, where they might live peacefully between a religious service in the morning and a game of cards in the drug store with old friends in the evening. Others, ambitious and intelligent, were desirous to make a career. They knew by tradition that frequently in the church true merit is not rewarded and that true culture is not always the best way for a rapid career. They became easily familiar with intrigues and learned thoroughly the way of acquiring valuable connections; but either they did not care to go beyond that external and apparent culture which hides the interior poverty and the wide desert of the soul, or they put their culture at the service of their ambition, thinking — or feigning to think — with the brains of their ecclesiastical superiors. Obviously these groups were conservative in their tendencies and were closely united to the old-fashioned clergy in their stubborn opposition to every innovation in the Church.

But there were two other groups whose mental attitude, shaped in a different way, was anxious to find new lines of activity in their ministerial work. The first of them and the more numerous involved a considerable number of young priests deeply sincere in their desire to devote their life to the service of people; priests who, either for lack of mental training or on account of natural tendencies, preferred to scientific work in schools and libraries a practical work in social fields or in religious administration. The other group, smaller in number but very remarkable in quality, consisted of some intelligent young priests ready to devote themselves not only to the duties of ecclesiastical offices but also to religious

scientific work, with a pure, sincere desire to serve truth and goodness in the Church of Christ for the progress of mankind.

All these priests, sincere and insincere, intelligent and unintelligent, under the impulse of the papal voice came out from the sacristies and began their work in the world. It did not take long for many of them to feel their unpreparedness to meet a conflict with modern thought and modern social organization. They became aware that their language was not understood, and that they themselves were unable to understand the language of the world. The new Catholic organization found arrayed against it not only the old liberalism of freemasonry but also the young and already vigorous Socialist party, revolutionary and anti-religious in spirit. In the logomachies of the schools these young priests had been told that Socialism was but a Utopia, a theory which was going to be dissolved as soon as it came in contact with reality. Instead, they found that Socialism was already a strong political party, well organized through all Italy and rapidly spreading among the rural classes, in towns and villages till then considered the strongholds of Catholicism. Even greater was their disappointment in the realm of learning. They believed that their philosophy and their history were the only ones in the world, and they found that there was something else besides their knowledge, something that must be taken seriously and could not be dismissed with a single gesture of contempt.

In the following events we have to distinguish two different movements, which frequently are connected but never to be identified as they have been in the history of Italian Modernism—the politico-social movement, commonly known as *Democrazia cristiana*, and the religious scientific movement, to which the name of Modernism is especially applied. The first—*Demo-*

*crazia cristiana*—was started not only with the consent of the Vatican but even under its impulsion, and for some time developed under its direction; the second—Modernism—arose from the natural development of minds and consciences, not without the impulse of foreign influences, beyond, or rather against, the will and the intentions of the Vatican. It would be untrue to say that the second exerted a great influence on the first; strange as it may seem, it was rather the first which favored the development of the second.

The attempt to organize Italian Catholics on a political basis brought them into a close struggle with Socialism. A number of economic institutions, such as rural banks, coöperative stores, workingmen's leagues, rural coöperative associations, all strictly sectarian, were rapidly organized by the Catholics, who in a couple of years acquired through them a large body of clients and supporters, especially in rural districts. But Socialism was not only a political organization; it was also a doctrine, which on account of its appeal for a radical solution of the problem of poverty, was enthusiastically accepted by the lower classes. For the new Social-Catholic party it was comparatively easy to oppose Socialist institutions with other institutions, banks with new banks, and leagues with new leagues. But could they oppose to the Socialist doctrine an equally inviting doctrine, something more efficacious than the much-abused idea of Christian charity? The people wanted justice and no longer charity. Was there room for a true democracy in a Catholic society? At this point, quarrels began. The old conservative party of the *Opera dei Congressi*, prelates and aristocrats in touch with the Vatican, who wanted only an organization of electors faithfully obeying orders, did not understand why the young Catholics desired a democracy which would almost adopt the language and methods of the

enemy—the Socialists. Day by day the quarrels grew, until this disagreement became a serious danger to the vitality of the Catholic party itself. Both parties appealed to the Pope.

Leo XIII had lived in the expectation of international complications in European politics, from which he expected the opportunity for the restoration of his temporal kingdom. All his political activity had been a long preparation for that event, but by little and little he was realizing that his hopes were ill founded and that the development of that policy was too slow, while his life was near the end. He was anxious to accomplish something great in that direction before his death, and with his characteristic obstinacy and his decided will, he resolved to run the chance offered by the democratic tendencies of the young Catholic element. Moreover he was afraid of the Socialist propaganda that was daily gaining ground, and he was intelligent enough to understand that against organized Socialism, the work of the old leaders of the *Opera dei Congressi*, with its mollycoddish and microcephalous aristocrats, was useless and inefficacious. Thus "Christian Democracy" was christened, and the Encyclical "*Rerum novarum*" was its Magna Charta. Leo XIII liked to act for effect; to make "*un bel gesto*" from time to time was one of his weaknesses; but we have to recognize that almost always he chose the opportune moment. The Encyclical "*Rerum novarum*," besides its positive value and its special purpose, was a very remarkable "*bel gesto*," intended to prove to all the world that modern tendencies in social politics are not in opposition with the ideals and tendencies of the Church of Rome; that on the contrary, they find in that very Church their strongest support and their wisest leadership when the time is ripe for them.

This formal acknowledgment of the *Democrazia cristiana* on the part of the Pope was astonishing, es-



pecially as coming from a man of his age, of his aristocratic tendencies, and up to a certain point influenced by the Vatican environment. There are two reasons which explain how it was possible for a Pope like Leo to recognize the legitimacy of a democracy. First, he believed that he could control such a democracy, relying too much on the consciousness of his personal ascendancy and of the authority of his will and his words upon Italian Catholics. In the second place, the idea of democracy which Leo cherished and practically desired was something different from what we call democracy. He wanted a democracy blindly obedient to the papal direction. He did not realize that it was merely a paradox to try to organize a democracy with a social, economic, and political programme of its own, and at the same time to keep such a democracy under the strict control of an irresponsible and infallible authority. Christian democracy as outlined by Leo was based on a misconception. It was not a Christian but a papal democracy that Leo wished, and he did not remember that while the papacy is synonymous with the divine autocratic will, democracy is synonymous with the people's changeable mind; he did not understand that papal democracy was a contradiction in terms, and that no reconciliation on that basis was possible. He thought that a few concessions (more apparent than substantial) would be enough to satisfy the popular demand of the new Catholic democracy, and felt that it was a good bargain at that price to buy its support and its faithfulness for the development of his plan of political restoration. Very early this contradiction of principles was strongly felt in practice, and Christian democracy in its logical development disregarded papal directions, and more and more loudly advanced its claims for the liberty of fixing by itself its limits and its methods.

Was that Modernism? If it was, nobody was responsible for it but Pope Leo himself. Christian democrats, however, were not Modernists in the actual meaning of the word. Murri himself, the leader of the movement, remained faithful to his scholastic philosophy almost to the day when, excommunicated by the Church and defamed by clericals, he jumped to the extreme radicalism of his later career. They were not Modernists; but certainly they were no longer as their teachers had moulded them in the shade of clerical seminaries. They had changed a great deal; their activity in economic organizations, their political connections, their daily struggle against conservatives and socialists at once, their participation in public offices, had developed eminently in them the spirit of initiative, of self-confidence, and had given them a more dignified idea of their rights and their duties. They were no longer men who could be brought to act by imposing upon them in the name of obedience; they were already men for whom obedience had to be regulated by reason and conscience, and not reason and conscience by obedience.

By and by the Pope understood that instead of a democracy adapting itself to Christianity in conformity with the interest of the papacy, he had favored a democracy which was going to adapt to itself the Christian ideals as against the papal interests. The terms were reversed, and Leo, discovering that a democracy, even a Christian democracy, is not so easily governed as an order of friars, realized that the *Democrazia cristiana*, far from paving the way to a restoration of the temporal power, was becoming itself the greatest stumbling-block for any future attempt in that direction. In the last years of his pontificate, Pope Leo took several steps backward, but he did not pronounce the definitive condemnation of democracy. It would have been a public confession of failure, and he was too much possessed

by the consciousness of his infallibility, even in things having no connection with faith and dogma. Nevertheless, at his death everything was ready for the execution of Christian democracy; in regard to that Pius X was but the testamentary trustee of Leo XIII.

The social movement of Christian democracy was undoubtedly accompanied by a gradual development of new tendencies in connection with religious and spiritual life. The attempt to harmonize Catholicism and democracy necessarily brought minds to consider the problem of the nature and the constitution of the Church from a point of view different from the traditional one taught in clerical schools. Certainly not all of those young priests were much worried about it. The happiest men in the world when Christian democracy was read out of the Church were the young priests anxious to make a career. They had been working in the direction of democracy very unwillingly and only because it was the will of the Pope; but they were longing to return to their peaceful life of the sacristy, to their delicate intrigues of confessional and cure, to their miserable competitions for offices, distinctions, and wealthy benefices. For them no problem existed except their career. Many others who had no serious mental preparation for theoretical questions considered the problem in a practical way, reducing it to its simplest terms. Why, they asked, is there this contradiction between the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of democracy? A superficial inquiry led them to the dangerous distinction between religion and church, between Christianity and Catholicism. Farther with that analysis they did not dare to go. They remained faithful to the Roman Church. But something was dead in their souls—their enthusiasm. They lost the energy that comes from a faith backed by strong conviction, and though fulfilling their duty, they could not forget the dream of their first years of

priesthood. Their doubt was not strong enough to conquer their faith, but their faith was not living enough to give them peace of conscience.

The last group went through a different series of experiences. Many of them had attended and had been graduated from public universities, and had acquired a thorough knowledge of modern thought. They realized that the history of the Church could be judged from a different point of view from that of a divine revelation. "Does the history of the Church justify the postulate of a divine revelation?" It was the first fundamental question. They found that it was denied by modern thought, and in the old armory of the classical apologetic, they did not find a good weapon to oppose to such a denial, based, as it was, upon new historical ascertainment or new valuation of religious experiences. And again, "If the postulate of a divine revelation is not justified, does that mean that the Catholic Church is a useless institution, and that all the treasures of spiritual traditions and of spiritual life involved in its tradition and in its life must be thrown away like faded flowers?"

At this stage Italian Modernism was strongly influenced by French and English Modernism, and its further development is closely connected with the general history of the Modernist attempt for a reconciliation between Catholic faith and modern science. It is beyond the limits of this article to give even an outline of that history. It is to be observed, however, that among Italian Modernists there was a greater variety of mental attitudes and tendencies than among Modernists of other nationalities. This fact was due to the peculiar conditions of the Italian clergy. There were not among them men of such authority as Loisy and Tyrrell. Italian Modernists were almost all young men, belonging to the generation educated in seminaries from 1890 to 1900;

many of them were fresh from theological schools and universities. Among the priests of the preceding generation there were no Modernists. Some of them who, having a liberal mind, had left the Church, had become rationalists; in any case they were no longer interested in religious life and religious problems.

The tradition of the liberal Catholicism of Gioberti and Rosmini had been broken by the abolition of theological Faculties in public universities. There was no teaching of religious sciences of any kind in Italian public schools; therefore no opportunity was given to anyone to be interested in religious studies except in clerical seminaries, where nothing but doctrine "*ad mentem S. Thomae*" was allowed. Furthermore, French, German, and English Modernists were united in their resentment against what was called the "Italianization of the papacy." On this point some of the Italian Modernists were too much dominated by national feelings to approve with all their heart those anti-Italian tendencies.

The abandonment of the teaching of religious sciences in Royal Italian Universities accounts also for the small number of Italian Catholic laymen who became Modernists. It is true, however, that this small group contained very valuable men, who in the last period of Modernism showed for a while an unexpected vitality, especially through the famous review *Il Rinnovamento*. But it was too late, and their attempt was unsuccessful.

What became of Italian Modernism after the condemnation? The social-political movement of the *Democrazia cristiana*, embodied in its last stage in the *Lega Nazionale* of Romolo Murri, gradually took a more radical character, till it reached a programme of Christian Socialism and asked to be incorporated into the Socialist party as a distinct branch. But the Italian Socialists, not less intolerant than the Roman Curia, refused the

collaboration of the *Lega Nazionale*, which was afterwards dissolved.

The intellectual movement among the new clergy was checked. Modernism had not yet reached such a stage of maturity that it was dangerous for the Church to throttle it. Rather than a movement with a definite purpose, Modernism was still a tendency, a preparation for a movement. Some of these Modernists who had been converted to the Neo-Kantian philosophy found in the shadow of the practical reason a private solution of all contradiction between the ideal and the historical development of the Church. They are still members of the Roman Church, some even holding important offices in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and some teaching scholastic philosophy or theology *ad mentem S. Thomae* in clerical seminaries. Others were attracted by the Neo-Hegelian doctrines, then in great favor in Italian universities, and found in that philosophy their true and only religion. They left the Church, and many are today teaching classics or philosophy in public schools. Others, finally, took a different path. They were the followers of the philosophy of immanence, which Pius X in his Encyclical attributes to all the Modernists. The book of Blondel, *La philosophie de l'action*, had been the new gospel for their spiritual life. But they were not blind. They were aware that the path of immanence was not without danger. They understood that it was not very easy to harmonize the intellectual idea of the transcendent God of Catholicism with the subjectivism of the doctrine of immanence, as it was a hard task to reconcile the historicism of Loisy with the *a priorism* of faith and revelation. But after all, were they not justified in thinking that those logical oppositions could be transcended in the realm of practical activity, if upon those postulates it was possible to develop a new spiritual activity?

It was clear that this process was not itself a definitive solution, neither of the historical nor of the philosophical problem, but it was the only way through which most of the spiritual values of Catholicism could be preserved and utilized. Was it a compromise? But what solution of religious problem is not a compromise? Philosophers of idealism, whose philosophy is the only religion of their spirit, do they not live themselves in constant compromise between their theories and the practical philosophy of life, which is not at all their ideal philosophy but with which they have to reckon at any moment? Was it an illusion? But is it not through illusions and through audacious attempts that human progress moves towards the realization of a higher ideal? And for these ideals Italian Modernists faced the greatest sacrifices. They knew that they were spoiling their life. Young, intelligent, cultured, irreproachable in their public and private life, as Pius X himself attested in his Encyclical, they were highly gifted for the offices and dignities of the Church; but their love of truth was stronger than their ambition. They knew what was to follow; the examples of Lamennais, of Döllinger, of Loyson, and hundreds of others were present before their spirit. They knew that a condemnation was the irreparable issue of the movement, and that after a condemnation their names would remain forever engraved on the list of reprobates, in spite of repentances and apologies.

The Roman Church may forget all sins except the sin of thinking in a way different from its own. Monsignor Bonomelli never was a cardinal, though he deserved that dignity more than a hundred other Italian prelates. Monsignor Ireland never will obtain the red hat, in spite of his repentance and his later undemocratic utterances in favor of the temporal kingdom of the papacy. Modernists knew that, and they — the men accused by

the Pope of curiosity and pride as the sole source of their spiritual activity — they persisted in their attitude till the end came. Certainly, in their ranks there were many unprepared or inspired by less noble and pure reasons; there were even traitors among them. But every movement carries with itself evil as well as good, men of bad faith together with men of pure ideals. At any rate, the dead waters had begun to move, and in the movement was life, hope, resurrection. Their motto was "*laboremus*" — work for the intellectual and moral elevation of the clergy, of the people; work in all directions, scientific, social, political; work with the aim of reaching a higher and purer conception of religious life, not through philosophical speculation or theological subtleties but through righteousness and good will. They were not the representatives of a system of philosophy, they were not a sect, nor an organized body of reformers. Modernism was but a spiritual attitude, a strong faith and a vivid enthusiasm, trying to galvanize the dead religious spirit of the Italian people.

But the end came earlier than was expected. Was the Pope justified in condemning Modernism in all its forms and in all its manifestations? Certainly Pius X was logical; but do we not also call logical the German governor of Belgium who executed Miss Cavell, guilty of patriotism? *Summum jus, summa injuria*. Condemned and persecuted, what could Modernists do? They could but choose between two issues: either try to organize a new church in opposition to the Roman Curia, or, putting aside the idea of a collective activity, resolve individually the problem of their future life. The first way was impracticable. As I have said, Modernism was not of the nature of a sect; Modernists themselves were far from united on a common programme. Furthermore, they knew that their activity had not yet aroused a deep interest or an effective in-



fluence on the consciences of the Italian people. Old Liberals through their sectarian spirit, Radicals through diffidence, Socialists through their irreligious *a priorism*, the Government party through its tradition of compromises with the Vatican, the common people through their indifference, all through their spirit of hopeless skepticism, did not understand what Modernism was. They did not appreciate its spiritual value, and considered it as an unimportant new chapter of the history of theological quarrels; and, what was worse, the common people conceived of Modernism as a movement of young priests who, tired of their loneliness, wanted to take wives.

The individual solution was left. It became more urgent after the imposition of the papal oath against Modernism. There is hardly to be found in the history of the papacy an act of more refined cruelty than that oath urged upon thousands of young priests, guilty only of having minds of their own and of being sincere and loyal to their consciences. This was the last drop that made the cup run over. Many lost their only hope, and their faith in the Church was broken down forever. Some of them resigned their positions, left the Church, and are living with their Christian faith, as laymen, outside of every religious movement. They left their ranks after long hesitation and anguish of spirit, left their ecclesiastical life with the deepest regret and unforgettable sorrow, like one who leaves the beloved person to whom all the enthusiasm of youth was dedicated but with whom it is no longer possible to live, because in the house of adultery there is no more room for him. And they went through the world, sometimes despised, often underestimated, always struggling hard to make their living, because it is not easy and not even always possible for a man who begins his life anew at an age when he ought to be at the highest success, to find con-

genial work in conformity with his tendencies and his intellectual training.

Some others among the Modernists kept their places in the Catholic Church and in the ministry. They pronounced with their lips the oath that their souls refused, and they are living now in the Church in lower offices, in the shadow; they are the penitents praying under the porch, waiting the opening of the doors. They know that the reasons of the spirit are higher than all other reasons, but they could not free themselves. Men cannot live by logic, any more than by bread alone. They were called cowards and hypocrites; they were obliged to hide themselves, to keep silent, to bow before the idols of the Curia; and they are still there, waiting the day of resurrection and of light. It may be that their presence in the Church, even in the shadow and in scorn, is necessary. We do not dare to judge consciences so fiercely tested. We know that there are subtle shades of feeling with which we have to reckon in our spiritual as well as in our material life, and as we do not praise, neither do we condemn them.

However the Modernists resolved their spiritual problem, we own a deep sense of respect and sympathy for these men who knew the anguish of doubt and the joy of illusions, who so enthusiastically lived their faith, and for their faith and their spiritual liberty are suffering in the path of the world or in the shadow of the Church.